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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

DOCKET NUMBER	ANTICIPATED CLASSIFICATION OF THIS APPLICATION:		PRIOR APPLICATION	
	CLASS	SUBCLASS	EXAMINER	ART UNIT
8477.99USC1			F. POINVIL	2768

CERTIFICATE UNDER 37 CFR 1.10

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By Linda McCormick
Name: Linda McCormick

JC496 U.S. PTO
09/598586
06/21/00

CONTINUATION APPLICATION UNDER 37 C.F.R. § 1.53(b)

BOX PATENT APPLICATION
Assistant Commissioner for Patents
Washington, DC 20231

Dear Sir:

This is a request for filing a continuation application under 37 CFR § 1.53(b) of Serial No. 08/892,563, filed on July 14, 1997 entitled SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR AWARDED CREDITS TO PERSONS WHO BOOK TRAVEL-RELATED RESERVATIONS by the following inventor(s):

Full Name Of Inventor	Family Name	First Given Name	Second Given Name
Residence & Citizenship	City	State or Foreign Country	Country of Citizenship
Post Office Address	Post Office Address	City	State & Zip Code/Country
Full Name Of Inventor	Family Name	First Given Name	Second Given Name
Residence & Citizenship	City	State or Foreign Country	Country of Citizenship
Post Office Address	Post Office Address	City	State & Zip Code/Country
Full Name Of Inventor	Family Name	First Given Name	Second Given Name
Residence & Citizenship	City	State or Foreign Country	Country of Citizenship
Post Office Address	Post Office Address	City	State & Zip Code/Country
Full Name Of Inventor	Family Name	First Given Name	Second Given Name
Residence & Citizenship	City	State or Foreign Country	Country of Citizenship
Post Office Address	Post Office Address	City	State & Zip Code/Country
Full Name Of Inventor	Family Name	First Given Name	Second Given Name
Residence & Citizenship	City	State or Foreign Country	Country of Citizenship
Post Office Address	Post Office Address	City	State & Zip Code/Country

1. ☒ Enclosed is a copy of the prior application; including the specification, claims, drawings, oath or declaration showing the applicant's signature, and any amendments referred to in the oath or declaration filed to complete the prior application. (It is noted that no amendments referred to in the oath or declaration filed to complete the prior application introduced new matter therein.) The continuing application is as follows: 12 pages of specification, 40 claims, 1 pages of abstract, 7 sheets of drawings, and 4 pages of oath or declaration.
- ☒ The entire disclosure of the prior application, from which a copy of the oath or declaration is supplied, is considered as being part of the disclosure of the accompanying application and is hereby incorporated by reference therein.
2. ☐ Cancel original claims of this application before calculating the filing fee. (At least one original independent claim must be retained for filing purposes.)
3. ☒ The filing fee is calculated below:

CLAIMS AS FILED

NUMBER FILED	NUMBER EXTRA		RATE	FEE
TOTAL CLAIMS:				
36 -20	16	x	\$18.00	288.00
INDEPENDENT CLAIMS				
2 -3	0	x	\$78.00	0.00
			BASIC FILING FEE:	\$690.00
			TOTAL FILING FEE:	978.00

- ☐ A Verified Statement that this filing is by a small entity is already filed in the prior application.
- ☐ A Verified Statement that this filing is by a small entity is attached.
4. ☒ Payment of fees:
 - ☒ Attached is a check in the amount of \$978.00.
 - ☐ Please charge Deposit Account No. 13-2725.
5. ☒ The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees as set forth in 37 CFR §§ 1.16 to 1.18 which may be required by this paper or credit any overpayment to Account No. 13-2725.
6. ☒ Amend the specification by inserting before the first line the sentence:

"This application is a continuation of application Serial No. 08/892,563, filed July 14, 1997, which application(s) are incorporated herein by reference."
7. ☒ A set of formal drawings (7 sheets) is enclosed.
8. ☐ Priority of application Serial No. , filed on in , is claimed under 35 U.S.C. 119.
- ☐ The certified copy has been filed in prior application Serial No. , filed .


9. ☒ The prior application is assigned of record to Radisson Hotels International, Inc. located at Minneapolis, Minnesota.
10. ☒ The Power of Attorney in the prior application is to:

Merchant & Gould P.C.
Minneapolis, MN 55402-4131

11. ☒ A preliminary amendment is enclosed. (Claims added by this amendment have been properly numbered consecutively beginning with the number next following the highest numbered original claim in the prior application.)
- ☐ Fee for excess claims is attached.
12. ☒ A petition and fee has been filed to extend the term in the prior application until June 22, 2000. A copy of the petition for extension of time in the prior application is attached.
13. ☐ The inventor(s) in this application are less than those named in the prior application and it is requested that the following inventors identified above for the prior application be deleted:
14. ☐ Also Enclosed:
15. ☒ Address all future communications to the **Attention of Alan G. Gorman** (may only be completed by attorney or agent of record) at the address below.
16. ☒ A return postcard is enclosed.

Respectfully submitted,

MERCHANT & GOULD P.C.
P.O. Box 2903
Minneapolis, MN 55402-0903
612.332.5300


Alan G. Gorman
Reg. No. 38,472
AGG:NPJ:PSTkaw

Date:

6/21/00

S/N NEW FILING

PATENT

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicant:	HEINTZEMAN ET AL.	Examiner:	UNKNOWN
Serial No.:	NEW FILING	Group Art Unit:	UNKNOWN
Filed:	HEREWITH	Docket No.:	8477.99USC1
Title:	COMPUTERIZED APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR AWARDING CREDITS TO PERSONS WHO TRANSACT ON-LINE PURCHASES (AS AMENDED HEREIN)		

CERTIFICATE UNDER 37 CFR 1.10

'Express Mail' mailing label number: EL544510403US

Date of Deposit: June 21, 2000

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service 'Express Mail Post Office To Addressee' service under 37 CFR 1.10 on the date indicated above and is addressed to the Assistant Commissioner for Patents, Washington, D.C. 20231.

By: 

Name: Linda McCormick

PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT

Box Patent Application
Assistant Commissioner for Patents
Washington, D.C. 20231

Dear Sir:

Please amend the above-identified patent application as follows.

In the Title

Please change the title to read: --COMPUTERIZED APPARATUS AND METHOD FOR AWARDING CREDITS TO PERSONS WHO TRANSACT ON-LINE PURCHASES--.

In the Specification

On page 2, line 24, please delete "assigns cumulative" and insert therefore --cumulatively assigns--.

In the Claims

Please cancel claims 1-40.

Please add new claims 41-76, as follows.

41. A computerized on-line incentive system for awarding points to a user conducting an on-line purchase, the system comprising:

- (a) an access device connected to a network;
- (b) a computerized on-line sales environment, connected to the network and thereby accessible to the user of the access device, the on-line sales environment permitting the user to conduct an on-line purchase; and
- (c) an on-line award system connected to the network, the on-line award system being in communication with the on-line sales environment and possessing an account holding a point total corresponding to the user.

42. The computerized on-line incentive system of claim 41, wherein the computerized on-line sales environment comprises:

- (a) a computerized reception component adapted to receive information relating to the on-line purchase;
- (b) a computerized processing component adapted to process the information relating to the on-line purchase; and
- (c) a computerized purchasing component adapted to effectuate the on-line purchase.

43. The computerized on-line sales environment of claim 42, wherein the reception component, processing component, and purchasing component reside on two or more computers that are in communication with each other and the network.

44. The computerized on-line incentive system of claim 41, wherein the computerized on-line sales environment comprises:

- (a) a computerized on-line purchase system adapted to receive the on-line purchase request;
- (b) a conversion system adapted to convert the on-line purchase request into one or more different formats; and
- (c) an on-line purchase facility adapted to effectuate the on-line purchase.

45. The computerized on-line incentive system of claim 41, wherein the computerized on-line sales environment comprises one or more on-line purchase computers connected to the network, the on-line purchase computers being adapted to receive, process, and effectuate the on-line purchase request.

46. The computerized on-line incentive system of claim 41, wherein the on-line award system further comprises a verifier classifying a point amount as pending until a predetermined event occurs and converting the pending point amount to a redeemable point amount after the occurrence of the event.

47. The computerized on-line incentive system of claim 41, wherein the on-line award system further comprises a verifier classifying a point amount as pending for a predetermined amount of time after the assignment of the point amount and converting the pending point amount to a redeemable point amount after the predetermined amount of time.

48. The computerized on-line incentive system of claim 41, wherein the on-line award system further comprises:

- (a) a first verifier classifying a point amount as pending until a predetermined event occurs; and
- (b) a second verifier maintaining the point amount as pending for a predetermined amount of time after the occurrence of the event and converting the pending point amount to redeemable after the predetermined amount of time.

49. The computerized on-line incentive system of claim 42, wherein the information relating to the on-line purchase includes a log-in identifier related to the user.

50. The computerized on-line incentive system of claim 41, wherein the on-line awards system further comprises a reporter adapted to report the point total assigned to the user.

51. The computerized on-line incentive system of claim 50, wherein the reporter reports on-line the point total to the user.

52. The computerized on-line incentive system of claim 50, wherein the reporter reports in a hard copy format the point total for the user.

53. The computerized on-line incentive system of claim 50, wherein the reporter reports a pending point total for the user.

54. The computerized on-line incentive system of claim 50, wherein the reporter reports a redeemable point total for the user.

55. The computerized on-line incentive system of claim 41, wherein the on-line awards system awards a point amount to the user's account based on the monetary value of the on-line purchase.

56. The computerized on-line incentive system of claim 41, wherein the on-line awards system identifies on-line whether the user has previously received points.

57. The computerized on-line incentive system of claim 41, wherein the on-line awards system assigns a bonus point amount to the user based upon a predetermined activity in conjunction with the on-line purchase.

58. The computerized on-line incentive system of claim 57, wherein the on-line award system assigns the bonus point amount to the user based upon one or more given criteria.

59. The computerized on-line incentive system of claim 42, wherein the information relating to the on-line purchase uniquely identifies the user.

60. The computerized on-line incentive system of claim 41, wherein the on-line awards system modifies the user's point total in response to adjustment or cancellation of the on-line purchase.

61. A computerized on-line method for awarding points to an individual conducting an on-line purchase, comprising steps of:

- (a) receiving on-line purchase information from a user via an access device connected to a network;
- (b) communicating the on-line purchase information to an awards system;
- (c) awarding points to the user based on the on-line purchase information; and
- (d) cumulating the points in a specified account for the user;

62. The computerized on-line method of claim 61, wherein step (c) further comprises classifying the points as pending points until a predetermined event occurs and converting the pending points to redeemable points after the occurrence of the event.

63. The computerized on-line method of claim 61, wherein step (c) further comprises classifying the points as pending points for a predetermined amount of time after the assignment of the points and converting the pending points to redeemable points after the predetermined amount of time.

64. The computerized on-line method of claim 61, wherein step (c) further comprises:
(c)(i) classifying the points as pending points until a predetermined event occurs; and
(c)(ii) maintaining the points as pending points for a predetermined amount of time after the occurrence of the event and converting the pending points to redeemable points after the predetermined amount of time.

65. The computerized on-line method of claim 61, wherein step (d) further comprises reporting the cumulative points assigned to the user.

66. The computerized on-line method of claim 65, wherein the reporting step comprises reporting on-line the cumulative points assigned to the user.

67. The computerized on-line method of claim 65, wherein the reporting step comprises reporting in a hard copy format the cumulative points assigned to the user.

68. The computerized on-line method of claim 65, wherein the reporting step comprises reporting a cumulative total pending points assigned to the user.

69. The computerized on-line method of claim 65, wherein the reporting step comprises reporting a cumulative total redeemable points assigned to the user.

70. The computerized on-line method of claim 61, wherein step (c) further comprises assigning the points to the user based upon the monetary value of the on-line purchase.

71. The computerized on-line method of claim 61, wherein step (c) further comprises identifying on-line whether the user has previously received points.

72. The computerized on-line method of claim 61, wherein step (c) further comprises assigning a bonus point amount to the user based upon a predetermined activity in conjunction with the on-line purchase.

73. The computerized on-line method of claim 72, wherein step (c) further comprises assigning the bonus point amount to the user based upon one or more given criteria.

74. The computerized on-line method of claim 61, wherein step (a) further comprises receiving a character string identifying the user.

75. The computerized on-line method of claim 61, wherein step (c) further comprises modifying the points in response to adjustment or cancellation of the on-line purchase.

76. The computerized on-line method of claim 61, wherein step (c) further comprises the step of storing a cumulative number of points assigned to the user following entry of the on-line purchase.

Remarks

This is a continuation of S/N 08/892,563, filed 7/14/1997, which is a file wrapper continuation of S/N 08/439,626, filed 5/12/1995, which is a continuation of S/N 08/385,381, filed 2/7/1995, which is a continuation of S/N 08/143,453, filed 10/26/1993. S/N 08/143,453 was abandoned in favor of S/N 08/385,381, which ultimately matured into U.S. Patent No. 5,483,444. S/N 08/439,626 has been abandoned in favor of 08/892,563, which remains under examination.


In the present application, claims 1-40 have been canceled, and claims 41-76 have been added. Minor corrections have been made to the specification and title, without the addition of any new matter.

Respectfully submitted,

MERCHANT & GOULD P.C.
P.O. Box 2903
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55402-0903
(612) 332-5300

Date:

6/21/00



Alan G. Gorman
Reg. No. 38,472
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**SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR AWARDING CREDITS TO
PERSONS WHO BOOK TRAVEL-RELATED RESERVATIONS**

5

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a system for providing incentives to persons who book travel-related reservations by awarding credits to those persons based upon the travel-related reservations.

10

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Travel agents and similar persons book most travel-related reservations. As an example, consider hotel reservations. Many customers book hotel reservations through a travel agent when the customer, for example, reserves airline tickets. Travel agents have a certain amount of discretion to recommend various hotels to travelers. Therefore, hotel companies have a strong interest in providing incentives for travel agents to recommend their hotels.

An incentives system that provides rewards to travel agents on a random basis is the World of Winners sweepstakes program, developed by Radisson Hotels International, Inc., the assignee of the present application. In the World of Winners sweepstakes program, for example, every tenth reservation booked in a particular hotel results in the travel agent receiving a reward or prize. The random nature of the World of Winners sweepstakes programs, however, reduces the incentive of travel agents to book travel-related reservations for particular hotels. When participating in such programs, travel agents do not know with certainty whether booking a hotel reservation for a particular hotel will result in an award.

35

Some systems have provided incentives to travel agencies based on booked reservations. These systems, however, do not necessarily provide personal incentives to

individual travel agents, since the systems are not on-line and the agency itself receives any awards or prizes based on booked reservations. Companies providing travel services thus do not necessarily gain significant benefits from these programs, since the individual travel agents have much discretion in making reservations and are not necessarily motivated by incentives and awards for the agency.

Therefore, a need exists for a system which provides incentives for travel agents and similar persons to book particular travel-related reservations by awarding cumulative credits to those travel agents based upon the bookings.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

A computerized system and method awards credits to persons who book travel-related reservations. The system receives a booking format which includes a plurality of fields. At least one of the fields includes information identifying a travel-related reservation. The system further transmits a code which identifies a person who created or initiated the travel-related reservation. Upon receiving the travel-related reservation, the system assigns cumulative credits to the person identified by the code based upon the travel-related reservation. Therefore, persons who enter travel-related reservations may build up credits over time and use those credits to receive a particular incentive such as an award or prize.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a block diagram illustrating how a system which implements the present invention typically interfaces with a reservation system.

Fig. 2 is a flow chart of a booking process.

Fig. 3 is a flow chart of a process for awarding credits.

Fig. 4 is a flow chart of a process for calculating credits.

5 Fig. 5 is a block diagram of a system which administates credits and awarding of prizes.

Fig. 6 is an example of a user interface, showing an "unsuccessful enrollment" message, for a system that implements the present invention.

10 Fig. 7 is an example of a user interface, showing a "successful enrollment" message, for a system that implements the present invention.

Fig. 8 is an example of a user interface, showing a message for credits earned following enrollment, for a
15 system that implements the present invention.

Fig. 9 is an example of a hard copy report of credits awarded to a travel agent.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

20 In the following detailed description of the preferred embodiment, reference is made to the accompanying drawings which form a part hereof and in which is shown by way of illustration a specific embodiment in which the invention may be practiced. This embodiment is described
25 in sufficient detail to enable those skilled in the art to practice the invention, and it is to be understood that other embodiments may be utilized and that structural or logical changes may be made without departing from the scope of the present invention. The following detailed
30 description is, therefore, not to be taken in a limiting sense, and the scope of the present invention is defined by the appended claims.

Overview

The present invention is an awards system that provides incentives to travel agents or other persons who book travel-related reservations. The system typically interacts with a travel agent on-line to assign credits for travel-related reservations and thus provide the travel agent with immediate feedback regarding the credits earned. A travel agent can continually earn credits during a period of time. Each credit earned by the travel agent is added into a cumulative total number of credits for the travel agent.

Therefore, the travel agent can "build up" credits over time and then "cash in" the credits for an award. The available awards are typically structured so that, as the value of the award increases, more credits are required to earn the award. An award offered to a travel agent may include, for example, a free stay at an hotel or a free travel package. The present invention thus provides incentives for travel agents to repeatedly book particular travel-related reservations, which can significantly increase bookings for those companies which provide the awards.

A key to making the present invention commercially viable involves determining how to implement the invention. Since most travel agents work through reservation systems (described below) that are already established, implementing such a system involves determining how to interact with the existing reservation systems.

A commercial system which has achieved a successful implementation of the present invention is the LOOK TO BOOK travel agent incentives program, developed by Radisson Hotels International, Inc. (hereinafter Radisson), the assignee of the present application. The incentives which the LOOK TO BOOK program provides to travel agents, and the corresponding increase in travel-related reservations, are evident from the following statistics.

After introduction of the LOOK TO BOOK program by Radisson, travel agents began immediately enrolling in the program at a rate of approximately 350 travel agents per day. As of October 1993, approximately 52,000 travel agents have
5 enrolled in the LOOK TO BOOK program, which is about one-sixth of the world's population of automated travel agents. Furthermore, travel agent bookings for Radisson have increased by approximately 60% following introduction of the LOOK TO BOOK program. This has occurred without any
10 particular change in advertising or other marketing efforts for Radisson. A travel agent research project conducted for Radisson by a local university showed that travel agents were much more willing to book Radisson Hotels because of the LOOK TO BOOK program.

15

Travel Reservations Network

Fig. 1 is a block diagram showing how a system which implements the present invention typically interfaces with a reservation system. A travel agent uses a terminal
20 10 to enter a travel-related reservation. The present application describes the invention with respect to a travel agent reservation system for illustrative purposes. Persons other than travel agents may also enter travel-related reservations. Travel-related reservations include,
25 for example, reservations for the following: cruise ships; car rental; lodging; theater; travel insurance; airline tickets; and trains.

A travel agent terminal 10 transmits the travel-related reservation to a computerized reservation system
30 12. Computerized Reservation Systems (CRS) are well known in the art and include, for example, CRS's known by the following trademarks and companies: AMADEUS; SABRE; WORLDSPAN; SYSTEM ONE; APOLLO; GEMINI; GALILEO; and AXESS.

A CRS allows a travel agent or other person to
35 enter a travel-related reservation in a particular

availability format. An availability format depends on the type of CRS used and typically comprises a plurality of fields joined together to form a database element. An availability format may include, for example, fields for the following information: rate availability; hotel chain code; city code; arrival date; checkout date; number of nights; category code; action code; and all rates. An example of an availability format is shown on line 100 in Fig. 6.

10 A conversion system 14 receives an availability format, which identifies a travel-related reservation, from CRS 12. Conversion system 14 then converts the travel-related reservation contained within an availability format into a standard booking format. An example of a conversion
15 system is the PIERRE computer system, developed by Radisson, the assignee of the present application. Therefore, regardless of which CRS 12 a travel agent uses, conversion system 14 preferably converts availability
20 a booking format is shown on line 102 in Fig. 6. In addition to receiving travel-related reservations from a travel agent terminal, via a CRS, awards system 16 can also receive travel-related reservations from other sources, such as the following examples: a phone (modem) link; an
25 automatic teller machine; a kiosk, and an interactive television system.

 Conversion system 14 can then transmit a booking format to a particular reservation facility 18. Reservation facility 18 may include, for example, a
30 particular hotel, cruise ship line, or car rental company identified by a travel-related reservation contained within a booking format.

Awards System

The present invention is preferably implemented by an awards system 16 which interacts with conversion system 14, as shown in Fig. 1. Awards system 16 receives information regarding travel-related reservations from conversion system 14 and awards credits (also referred to as "points") to travel agents or other persons who book the travel-related reservations.

Fig. 2 is a flow chart showing a booking process, which is typically a main processing loop, of awards system 16. Awards system 16 typically first processes a booking format at step 20. At step 22, awards system 16 checks the booking format for an identification of a travel agent or other person who entered the travel-related reservation. If the booking format does not have such an identification, awards system 16 then calculates credits which would have otherwise been assigned to the person (step 24) and then displays a message (step 26) to the person at terminal 10, indicating the number of credits which were lost by the individual. An example of a user interface for this transaction is shown in Fig. 6. Lines 104 in Fig. 6 show an example of an "unsuccessful enrollment" message.

If the booking format includes an identification, awards system 16 checks to determine if the identification is a new travel agent not already within a database for awards system 16 (step 28). Awards system 16 typically receives an identification of a travel agent or other person from one of the fields of a booking format. For example, a travel agent can enter a character string identification into a special instruction (SI) field 110 (see Fig. 7) of a booking format. In the example shown, the character string comprises the first initial, middle initial, and last name of the travel agent. Other character strings or codes may be used as an identification of the travel agent or other person who made the booking. Alternatively, awards system 16 may receive an

identification from a log-in identifier corresponding to a travel agent or other person. In some systems which may interface awards system 16, a person who enters bookings must log on to the system with an identifier. Therefore, awards system 16 can receive such a log-in identifier and will not require a separate identification of the travel agent or other person.

If the identification is not a new travel agent, awards system 16 then calculates the credits (step 30) and displays the credits awarded (step 32) to the travel agent, along with a corresponding message. An example of a user interface for this transaction is shown in Fig. 8. Lines 108 in Fig. 8 show an example of a message for indicating the number of credits awarded. The "0" redeemable credits shown in lines 108 of Fig. 8 preferably becomes incremented with each booking to show a cumulative credits awarded to the corresponding travel agent or similar person. Awards system 16 preferably stores cumulative credits, as shown displayed in Fig. 8, from one booking to the next so that awards system 16 can increment or decrement total credits as new booking are made. In addition to displaying credits or points awarded directly on-line to a travel agent, as shown in Fig. 8, awards system 16 can "park" such information in the background so that credits awarded information is accessible to a travel agent via a terminal.

Otherwise, awards system 16 determines at step 34 if the travel agent is eligible for the program. If the travel agent is not eligible, awards system 16 displays a standard message at step 40, such as lines 104 in Fig. 6. If the travel agent is eligible, awards system 16 then calculates the credits (step 36) and displays a new enrollment message (step 38). An example of an interface for this transaction is shown in Fig. 7. Lines 106 in Fig. 7 show an example of a "new enrollment" message.

Fig. 3 is a flow chart of a process for awarding or assigning credits. At step 42, awards system 16 begins processing a travel-related reservation. Awards system 16 verifies the credits with the actual travel-related reservation at step 44. Verification is performed to prevent fraud and to ensure that the credits are issued for a travel-related reservation which was actually used by a customer requesting the reservation. When awards system 16 initially assigns credits, those credits are typically classified as "pending" until awards system 16 performs a verification process. A travel agent preferably may not "cash in" credits while the credits are classified as pending. If awards system 16 determines in the verification that the credits comply with the actual reservation (step 46), then awards system 16 converts the credits from pending to redeemable or spendable at step 48. Otherwise, awards system 16 typically transfers the credits to an error queue at step 50 for manual processing.

A verification of the credits is typically based upon both an event and time. For example, with respect to hotel reservations, awards system 16 typically waits until a customer who requested the hotel reservation checks out of the corresponding hotel. Subsequently, awards system 16 typically waits for a predetermined period of time, such as ten days, to verify that the customer indeed used the hotel reservation. Finally, after the waiting period, awards system 16 converts the pending credits to redeemable credits. Alternatively, verification may be based solely upon either an event or time.

Fig. 4 is a flow chart of a process for calculating credits. Awards system 16 typically awards credits based upon the revenue for a particular travel-related reservation booking, which occurs at step 52. Other types of calculations for credits are possible. For example, awards system 16 may simply award a predetermined

number of credits for any particular booking. For lodging reservations, awards system 16 may, for example, award credits based on how many nights of lodging a customer has requested. At step 54, awards system 16 determines whether
5 bonus credits apply. Bonus credits supply additional incentives to the travel agents by increasing the number of credits that the travel agent may receive for a particular booking. If bonus credits apply, awards system 16 then calculates the bonus credits at step 56 for each particular
10 bonus program. Awards system 16 also calculates the standard credits available for the booking (step 58).

Awards system 16 uses bonus programs to award additional credits to a travel agent based upon a predetermined activity in conjunction with a booking.
15 Examples of predetermined activities, which may increase credits awarded, include the following: a product booked by a travel agent (for example, a travel package); lodging booked by a travel agent (for example, a type of hotel); when a travel agent books the travel-related reservation;
20 when a customer who requested the travel-related reservation uses the travel-related reservation; how a customer pays for the travel-related reservation (for example, using a particular type of credit card); how a customer guarantees the travel-related reservation; a class
25 of a customer (for example, age); or a class of a travel agent (for example, travel agent credit level or group affiliation).

At step 60, awards system 16 determines whether the travel agent who entered the reservation is a new
30 travel agent or a travel agent already within a database for awards system 16. If the travel agent is already in a database, awards system 16 calculates the total pending credits at step 62 and then retrieves the total redeemable credits for the corresponding travel agent at step 64.

Awards system 16 also preferably modifies cumulative credits as bookings are adjusted or cancelled.

Fig. 5 is a block diagram showing how awards system 16 interfaces with an administrative system 94 for administrating and awarding prizes based upon the credits. In addition to on-line reporting of credits through CRS's, awards system 16 may also generate printed documents reporting credits via system 94. An example of a hard copy report of credits is shown in Fig. 9.

Periodically, typically every 30 days, awards system 16 transmits a storage medium (step 66) which includes information related to processing within awards system 16. A storage medium may be transmitted to an outside vendor or, alternatively, functions of administrative system 94 may be performed by awards system 16. Submodule 70 receives the information and performs audit programs on the data. A travel agent master file 72 preferably maintains a database of the travel agents stored within awards system 16 and the corresponding credits awarded to the travel agents. File 72 also preferably maintains identifiers for agencies which engage the travel agents, which may be work addresses for travel agents. Submodule 78 adds new travel agents to the master file. Submodule 86 performs the function of sending enrollment kits to the new enrollees, which includes information on the program and rules for receiving prizes and awards based upon credits earned.

Submodule 74 receives and processes mail and telephone orders. Submodule 76 receives certificate orders. A travel agent typically submits an order for the purpose of redeeming earned credits for an award or prize. Submodule 80 updates the database for new addresses of enrollees. Submodule 82 updates the master file with new credits awarded, based upon credits calculated by submodule 84. Submodule 90 generates summary reports of credits and,

based upon this information, submodule 92 generates statements of credits for reporting to travel agents. These statements are then typically mailed to participating travel agents in order to report their credits. At step
5 68, system 94 periodically, typically every 30 days, sends updated information to awards systems 16.

While the present invention has been described in connection with the preferred embodiment thereof, it will be understood that many modifications will be readily
10 apparent to those skilled in the art, and this application is intended to cover any adaptations or variations thereof. It is manifestly intended that this invention be limited only by the claims and equivalents thereof.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A computerized system for awarding credits to persons who book travel-related reservations, comprising:
 - a) receive means for receiving information, comprising:
 - i) means for receiving a booking format which includes a plurality of fields, one or more of the fields including information identifying a travel-related reservation; and
 - ii) means for receiving a code identifying a person who booked the travel-related reservation; and
 - b) record means for awarding incentives based on travel-related reservations, comprising:
 - i) means for specifying an identification of the person corresponding to the code; and
 - ii) assignment means for assigning cumulative credits to the person identified by the code based upon the travel-related reservation.
2. The system of claim 1 wherein the record means further comprises verification means for classifying the credits as pending credits until a predetermined event occurs and for converting the pending credits to redeemable credits after the occurrence of the event.
3. The system of claim 1 wherein the record means further comprises verification means for classifying the credits as pending credits for a predetermined amount of time after the assignment of the credits and for converting the pending credits to redeemable credits after the predetermined amount of time.
4. The system of claim 1 wherein the record means further comprises:

- a) first verification means for classifying the credits as pending credits until a predetermined event occurs; and
 - b) second verification means for maintaining the credits as pending credits for a predetermined amount of time after the occurrence of the event and for converting the pending credits to redeemable credits after the predetermined amount of time.
- 5. The system of claim 1 wherein the means for receiving a code comprises means for receiving the code from one of the fields of the booking format.
 - 6. The system of claim 5 wherein the means for receiving a code comprises means for receiving the code from a special instruction field of the booking format.
 - 7. The system of claim 5 wherein the means for receiving a code comprises means for receiving the code from a login identifier related to the person.
 - 8. The system of claim 1 wherein the record means further comprises report means for reporting the cumulative credits assigned to the person.
 - 9. The system of claim 8 wherein the report means comprises means for reporting on-line the cumulative credits assigned to the person.
 - 10. The system of claim 8 wherein the report means comprises means for reporting in a hard copy format the cumulative credits assigned to the person.

11. The system of claim 8 wherein the report means comprises means for reporting a cumulative total pending credits assigned to the person.
12. The system of claim 8 wherein the report means comprises means for reporting a cumulative total redeemable credits assigned to the person.
13. The system of claim 1 wherein the assignment means comprises means for assigning the credits to the person based upon the monetary value of the travel-related reservation.
14. The system of claim 1 wherein the assignment means comprises means for identifying on-line whether the person has previously received credits.
15. The system of claim 1 wherein the assignment means comprises means for assigning bonus credits to the person based upon a predetermined activity in conjunction with the travel-related reservation.
16. The system of claim 15 wherein the assignment means comprises means for assigning the bonus credits to the person based upon one or more of the following: a product booked by the person; lodging booked by the person; when the person books the travel-related reservation; when a customer who requested the travel-related reservation uses the travel-related reservation; how the customer pays for the travel-related reservation; how the customer guarantees the travel-related reservation; a class of the customer; or a class of the person.

17. The system of claim 1 wherein the means for receiving a code comprises means for receiving a character string identifying the person.
18. The system of claim 1 wherein the means for specifying an identification of the person comprises means for linking the code to an identifier for an agency which engages the person.
19. The system of claim 1 wherein the assignment means comprises means for modifying the credits in response to adjustment or cancellation of the travel-related reservation.
20. The system of claim 1 wherein the assignment means comprises means for storing a cumulative number of credits assigned to the person following entry of the travel-related reservation.
21. A computerized method of awarding credits to persons who book travel-related reservations, comprising the steps of:
 - a) receiving information, comprising the steps of:
 - i) receiving electronically a booking format which includes a plurality of fields, one or more of the fields including information identifying a travel-related reservation; and
 - ii) receiving electronically a code identifying a person who entered the travel-related reservation; and
 - b) awarding incentives based on travel-related reservations, comprising the steps of:
 - i) specifying electronically an identification of the person corresponding to the code; and

ii) assigning electronically cumulative credits to the person identified by the code based upon the travel-related reservation.

22. The method of claim 21 wherein the awarding incentives step further comprises the step of classifying the credits as pending credits until a predetermined event occurs and converting the pending credits to redeemable credits after the occurrence of the event.
23. The method of claim 21 wherein the awarding incentives step further comprises the step of classifying the credits as pending credits for a predetermined amount of time after the assignment of the credits and converting the pending credits to redeemable credits after the predetermined amount of time.
24. The method of claim 21 wherein the awarding incentives step further comprises the steps of:
 - a) classifying the credits as pending credits until a predetermined event occurs; and
 - b) maintaining the credits as pending credits for a predetermined amount of time after the occurrence of the event and converting the pending credits to redeemable credits after the predetermined amount of time.
25. The method of claim 21 wherein the receiving a code step comprises the step of receiving the code from one of the fields of the booking format.
26. The method of claim 25 wherein the receiving a code step comprises the step of receiving the code from a special instruction field of the booking format.

27. The method of claim 25 wherein the receiving a code step comprises the step of receiving the code from a log-in identifier related to the person.
28. The method of claim 21 wherein the awarding incentives step further comprises the step of reporting the cumulative credits assigned to the person.
29. The method of claim 28 wherein the reporting step comprises the step of reporting on-line the cumulative credits assigned to the person.
30. The method of claim 28 wherein the reporting step comprises the step of reporting in a hard copy format the cumulative credits assigned to the person.
31. The method of claim 28 wherein the reporting step comprises the step of reporting a cumulative total pending credits assigned to the person.
32. The method of claim 28 wherein the reporting step comprises the step of reporting a cumulative total redeemable credits assigned to the person.
33. The method of claim 21 wherein the assigning step comprises the step of assigning the credits to the person based upon the monetary value of the travel-related reservation.
34. The method of claim 21 wherein the assigning step comprises the step of identifying on-line whether the person has previously received credits.
35. The method of claim 21 wherein the assigning step comprises the step of assigning bonus credits to the

person based upon a predetermined activity in conjunction with the travel-related reservation.

36. The method of claim 35 wherein the assigning step comprises the step of assigning the bonus credits to the person based upon one or more of the following: a product booked by the person; lodging booked by the person; when the person books the travel-related reservation; when a customer who requested the travel-related reservation uses the travel-related reservation; how the customer pays for the travel-related reservation; how the customer guarantees the travel-related reservation; a class of the customer; or a class of the person.
37. The method of claim 21 wherein the receiving a code step comprises the step of receiving a character string identifying the person.
38. The method of claim 21 wherein the specifying an identification step comprises the step of linking the code to an identifier for an agency which engages the person.
39. The method of claim 21 wherein the assigning step comprises the step of modifying the credits in response to adjustment or cancellation of the travel-related reservation.
40. The method of claim 21 wherein the assigning step comprises the step of storing a cumulative number of credits assigned to the person following entry of the travel-related reservation.

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A computerized system provides incentives for travel agents and similar persons to book particular travel-related reservations. The system achieves this by awarding cumulative credits to travel agents based upon bookings of travel-related reservations. The system receives a booking format which identifies a travel-related reservation. The system further receives a code which identifies a travel agent or other person who entered the travel-related reservation. Upon receiving the travel-related reservation, the system assigns cumulative credits to the travel agent identified by the code based upon the travel-related reservation. Travel agents can thus build up credits over time based upon their bookings of travel-related reservations and use those credits to receive a particular award or prize.

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Michelle White
printed name
Michelle White
Signature

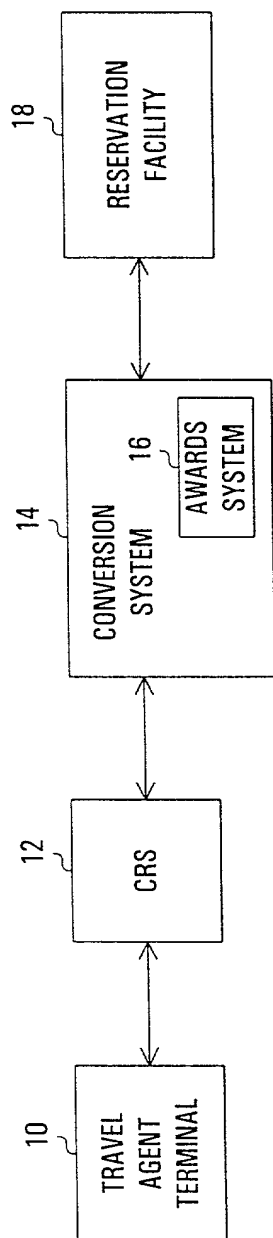
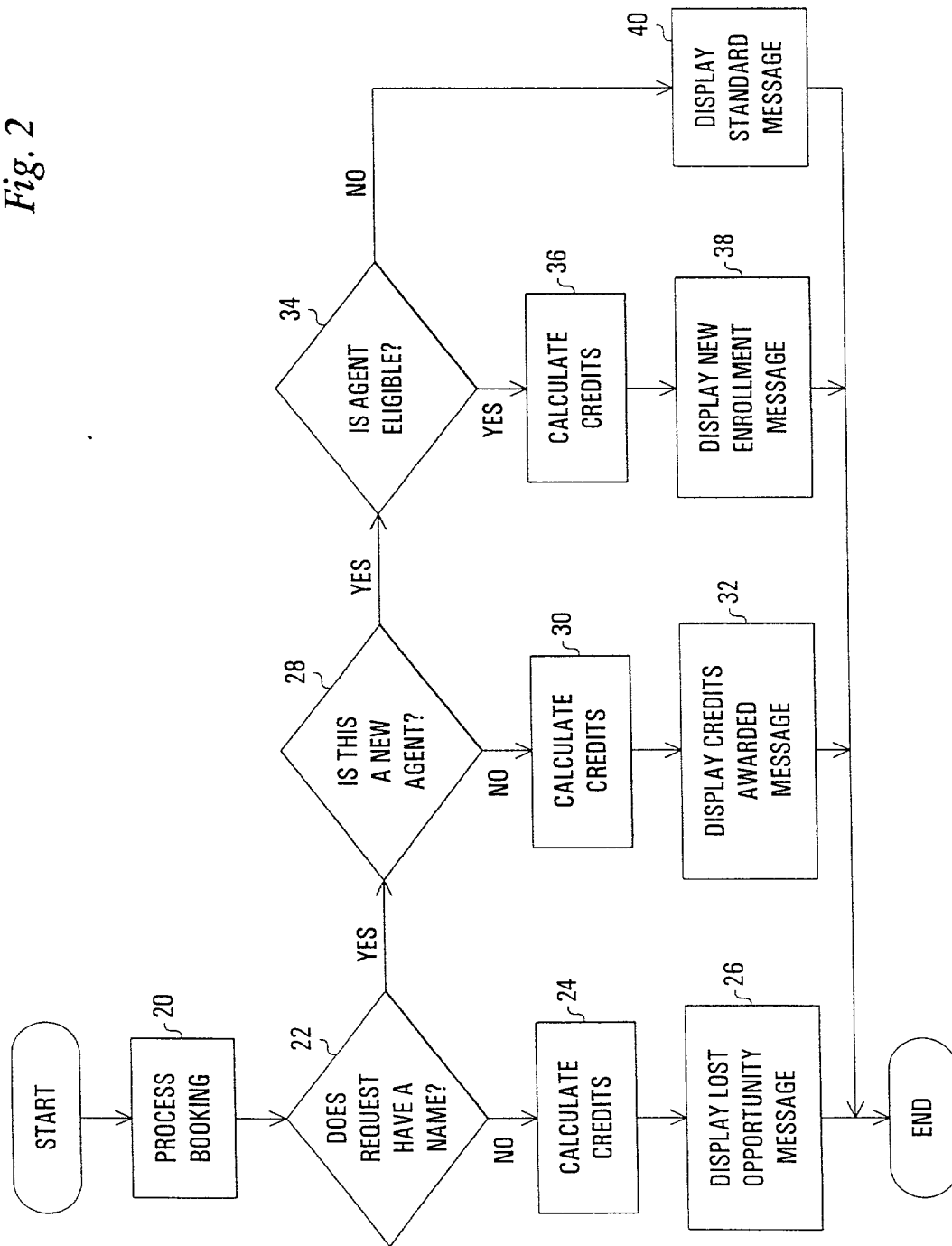


Fig. 1

Fig. 2



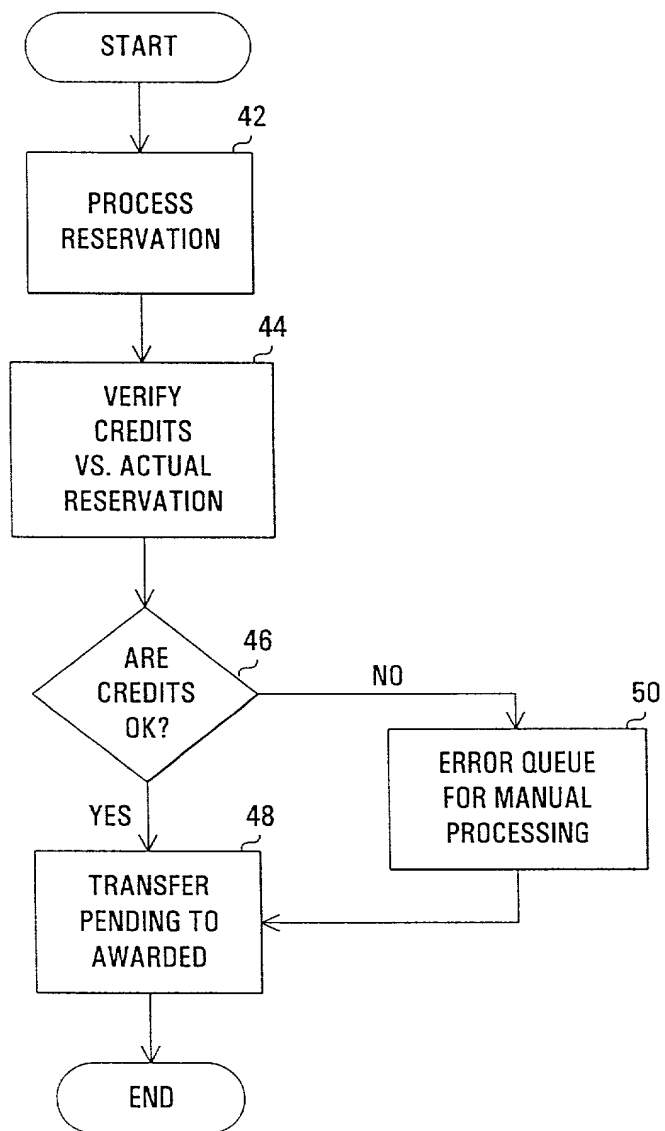
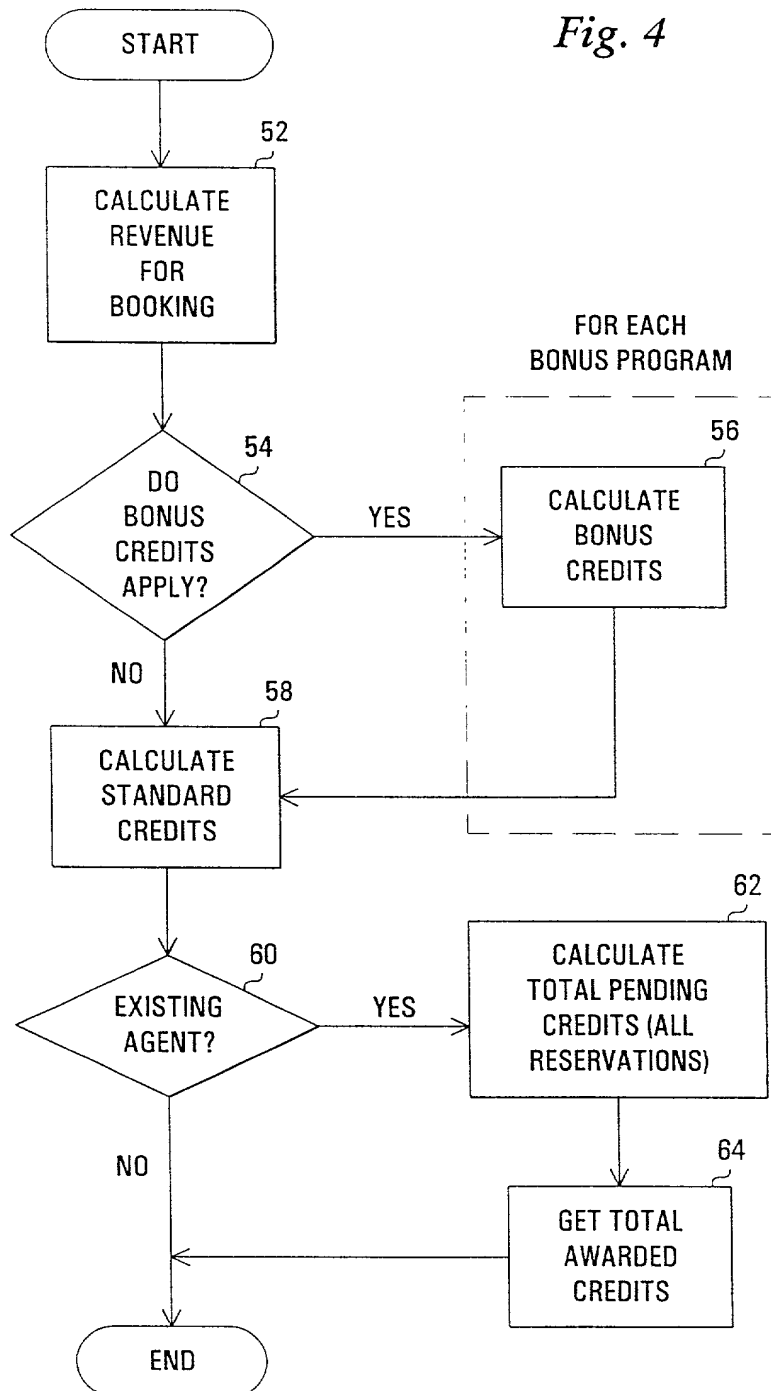
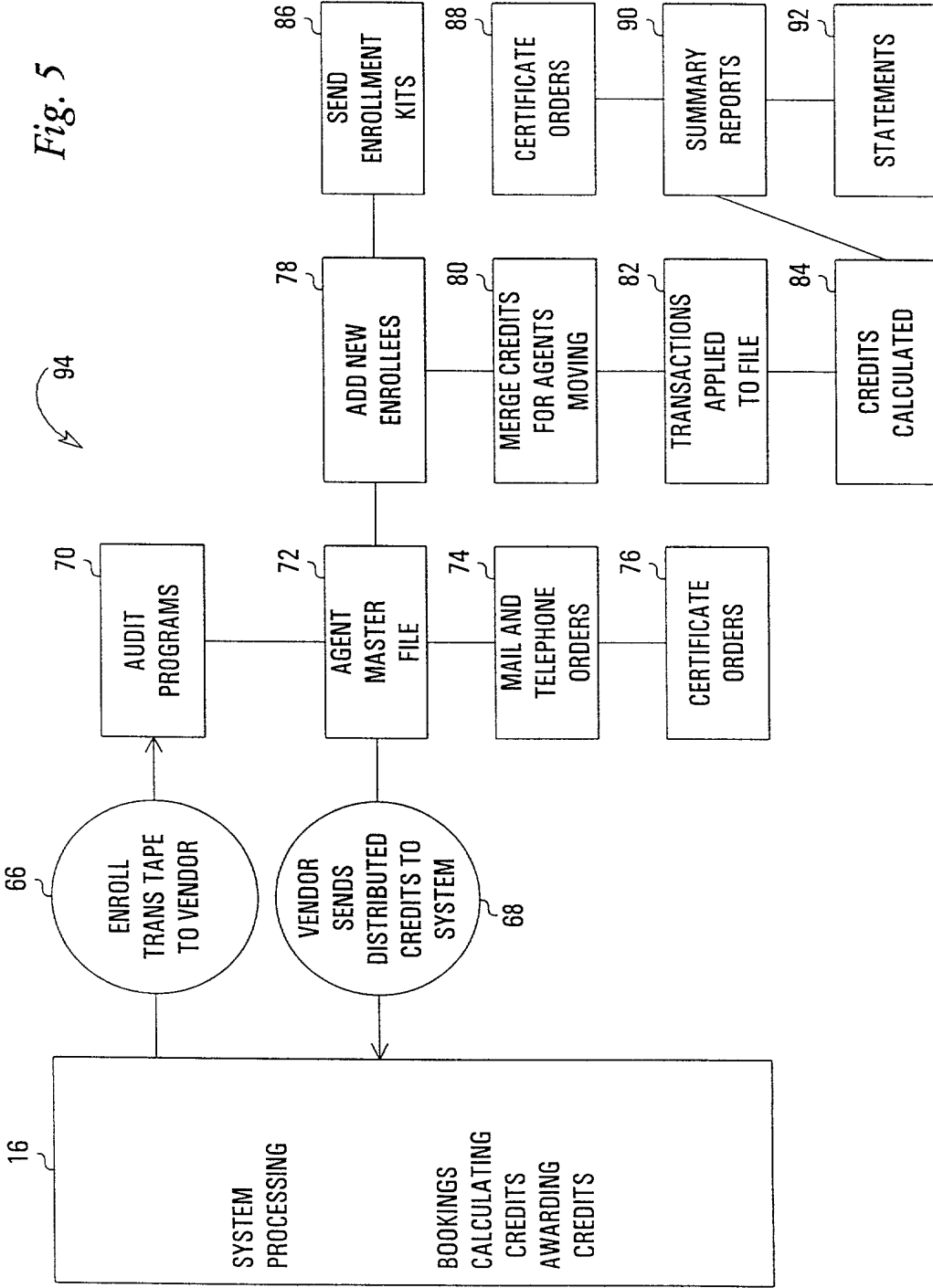


Fig. 3

Fig. 4





1 HHL RD SS1 XXX 01NOV-02NOV 1NT 16041 RADISSON TEST HOTEL ← 100
 1CORRAC -1/RT-USD89.00/AGT98010021 ← 102
 /NM-TEST TEST
 /RG-8900USD
 /CF-R4760026
 ACCEPTED /GTD 6P HLD CXL-SEE POLICY
 CORP TEST U ROOM
 YOU COULD HAVE EARNED 890 POINTS WITH THIS
 RESERVATION. TO PROPERLY ENROLL SEE: HODRD/INCE * ← 104
 >

Fig. 6

1 HHL RD SS1 XXX 20NOV-21NOV 1NT 16041 RADISSON TEST HOTEL ← 100
 1CORRAC -1/RT-USD89.00/AGT98010021/SI-RD-TSWRIGHT ← 102
 /NM-TEST TEST ↑
 /RG-8900USD 110
 /CF-R4760077
 ACCEPTED /GTD 6P HLD CXL-SEE POLICY
 CORP TEST U ROOM
 SUCCESSFUL ENROLLMENT. THIS BOOKING EARNS YOUR
 FIRST 890 PENDING POINTS IN LOOK TO BOOK. * ← 106
 >

Fig. 7

1 HHL RD SS1 XXX 20NOV-21NOV 1NT 16041 RADISSON TEST HOTEL ← 100
 1CORRAC -1/RT-USD89.00/AGT98010021/SI-RD-BSKROGER ← 102
 /NM-TEST TEST ↑
 /RG-8900USD 110
 /CF-R4760061
 ACCEPTED /GTD 6P HLD CXL-SEE POLICY
 CORP TEST U ROOM
 THIS BOOKING WILL EARN YOU 890 PENDING POINTS.
 YOU HAVE 0 REDEEMABLE POINTS IN YOUR ACCOUNT. * ← 108
 >

Fig. 8

V2345678/2345678-9
 RGSMITH
 TRAVEL ANYWHERE
 123 MAIN STREET
 CHICAGO, IL 60610

ACTIVITY DATES	
AVAILABLE REDEEMABLE POINTS	2,500

BULLETIN BOARD

TRANSACTION DATE	CURRENT ACTIVITY: BOOKING AND REDEMPTION INFORMATION	PENDING POINTS	REDEEMABLE POINTS
10/01/92	BALANCE FORWARD	0	0
10/05/92	NEW BOOKING R3456217 - DEPART DATE 11/15/92	2,500	
10/05/92	EDWARDIAN BONUS R3456217 -	500	
10/30/92	NEW BOOKING R7324598 - DEPART DATE 12/26/92	1,000	
11/03/92	NEW BOOKING R2476923 - DEPART DATE 03/08/93	500	
11/03/92	MODIFY BOOKING R4736590 - DEPART DATE 03/05/93	-100	
11/25/92	CONFIRMED TRAVEL R3456217	-2,500	2,500
	TOTAL	1,900	2,500

Fig. 9

United States Patent Application

COMBINED DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY

As a below named inventor I hereby declare that: my residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below ext to my name; that

I verily believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or a joint inventor (if plural inventors are named below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled: SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR AWARDED CREDITS TO PERSONS WHO BOOK TRAVEL-RELATED RESERVATIONS

the specification of which

is attached hereto

☒ was filed on October 26, 1993 as application serial no. 08/143,453 and was amended on (if applicable) (in the case of a PCT-filed application) described and claimed in international no. filed and as amended on (if any), which I have reviewed and for which I solicit a United States patent.

hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above-identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to the examination of this application in accordance with Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, § 1.56 (see page 3 attached hereto).

hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code, § 119/365 of any foreign application(s) for patent of inventor's certificate listed below and have also identified below any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate having a filing date before that of the application on the basis of which priority is claimed:

☒ no such applications have been filed.

☐ such applications have been filed as follows:

FOREIGN APPLICATION(S), IF ANY, CLAIMING PRIORITY UNDER 35 USC § 119

COUNTRY	APPLICATION NUMBER	DATE OF FILING (day, month, year)	DATE OF ISSUE (day, month, year)

ALL FOREIGN APPLICATIONS, IF ANY, FILED BEFORE THE PRIORITY APPLICATION(S)

COUNTRY	APPLICATION NUMBER	DATE OF FILING (day, month, year)	DATE OF ISSUE (day, month, year)

I hereby claim the benefit under Title 35, United States Code, § 120/365 of any United States and PCT international application(s) listed below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35, United States Code, § 112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose material information as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, 1.56(a) which occurred between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT international filing date of this application.

U.S. APPLICATION NUMBER	DATE OF FILING (day, month, year)	STATUS (patented, pending, abandoned)

I hereby appoint the following attorney(s) and/or patent agent(s) to prosecute my application and to transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected herewith:

Bartingale, Kari H.	Reg. No. 35,183	Hassing, Thomas A.	Reg. No. 36,159	Schuman, Mark D.	Reg. No. 31,197
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Brennan, Thomas F.	Reg. No. 35,075	Kowalchuk, Alan W.	Reg. No. 31,535	Smith, Phillip H.	Reg. No. 20,476
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Byrne, Linda M.	Reg. No. 32,404	Lasky, Michael B.	Reg. No. 29,555	Strawbridge, Douglas A.	Reg. No. 28,376
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Carter, Charles G.	Reg. No. 35,093	Lynch, David W.	Reg. No. 36,204	Sumner, John P.	Reg. No. 29,114
Caspers, Philip P.	Reg. No. 33,227	Mau, Michael L.	Reg. No. 30,087	Sumners, John S.	Reg. No. 24,216
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Gresens, John J.	Reg. No. 33,112	Schmidt, Cecil C.	Reg. No. 20,566	Yip, Philip S.	Reg. No. 37,265
Hamre, Curtis B.	Reg. No. 29,165				

I hereby authorize them to act and rely on instructions from and communicate directly with the person/assignee/attorney firm/organization/who/which first sends/sent this case to them and by whom/which I hereby declare that I have consented after full disclosure to be represented unless/until I instruct Merchant, Gould to the contrary.

Please direct all correspondence in this case to Merchant, Gould, Smith, Edell, Welter & Schmidt at the address indicated below:

3100 Norwest Center, Minneapolis, MN 55402-4131
Telephone No. (612)332-5300

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issue thereon.

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	Date 12/16/93	Date December 16, 1993	Date 12/20/93	

For Additional Inventors:

X Indicate here and attach sheet with same information, including date and signature.

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6	Signature of Inventor 204	Signature of Inventor 205	Signature of Inventor 206	
	Date 12/17/93	Date 12/16/93	Date	

1.56 Duty to disclose information material to patentability.

(a) A patent by its very nature is affected with a public interest. The public interest is best served, and the most effective patent examination occurs when, at the time an application is being examined, the Office is aware of and evaluates the teachings of all information material to patentability. Each individual associated with the filing and prosecution of a patent application has a duty of candor and good faith in dealing with the Office, which includes a duty to disclose to the Office all information known to that individual to be material to patentability as defined in this section. The duty to disclose information exists with respect to each pending claim until the claim is cancelled or withdrawn from consideration, or the application becomes abandoned. Information material to the patentability of a claim that is cancelled or withdrawn from consideration need not be submitted if the information is not material to the patentability of any claim remaining under consideration in the application. There is no duty to submit information which is not material to the patentability of any existing claim. The duty to disclose all information known to be material to patentability is deemed to be satisfied if all information known to be material to patentability of any claim issued in a patent was cited by the Office or submitted to the Office in the manner prescribed by §§ 1.97(b)-(d) and 1.98. However, no patent will be granted on an application in connection with which fraud on the Office was practiced or attempted or the duty of disclosure was violated through bad faith or intentional misconduct. The Office encourages applicants to carefully examine:

- (1) prior art cited in search reports of a foreign patent office in a counterpart application, and
- (2) the closest information over which individuals associated with the filing or prosecution of a patent application believe any pending claim patentably defines, to make sure that any material information contained therein is disclosed to the Office.

(b) Under this section, information is material to patentability when it is not cumulative to information already of record or being made of record in the application, and

- (1) It establishes, by itself or in combination with other information, a prima facie case of unpatentability of a claim.
- (2) It refutes, or is inconsistent with, a position the applicant takes in:
 - (i) Opposing an argument of unpatentability relied on by the Office, or
 - (ii) Asserting an argument of patentability.

A prima facie case of unpatentability is established when the information compels a conclusion that a claim is unpatentable under the preponderance of evidence, burden-of-proof standard, giving each term in the claim its broadest reasonable construction consistent with the specification, and before any consideration is given to evidence which may be submitted in an attempt to establish a contrary conclusion of patentability.

(c) Individuals associated with the filing or prosecution of a patent application within the meaning of this section are:

- (1) Each inventor named in the application;
 - (2) Each attorney or agent who prepares or prosecutes the application; and
 - (3) Every other person who is substantively involved in the preparation or prosecution of the application and who is associated with the inventor, with the assignee or with anyone to whom there is an obligation to assign the application.
- (d) Individuals other than the attorney, agent or inventor may comply with this section by disclosing information to the attorney, agent, or inventor.